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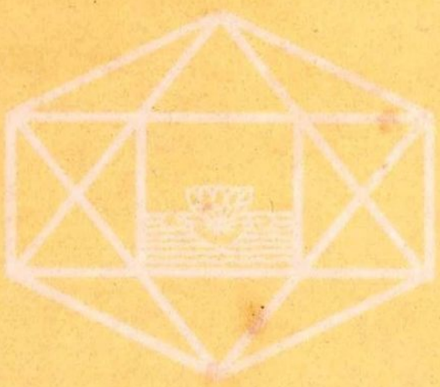

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY
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— Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.

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On December 5, 1950, Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body. The Mother observed, "We must not be bewildered by appearances. Sri Aurobindo has not left us. Sri Aurobindo is here, as living and as present as ever and it is left to us to realise his work with all the sincerity, eagerness and concentration necessary."

In this December issue of AIM, we reproduce an article on Sri Aurobindo's passing away (first published in May 1951) written by Dr. Nirodbaran, one of the personal attendants of Sri Aurobindo (for 12 years from 1938). He also used to take dictations from the Master of his epic poem 'Savitri', and this explains the many references to the epic in the essay. We hope, our readers will find this article significant.

INTEGRAL CONVERSION

Above all conflicts and struggles, in a
harmonious blossoming.

The name (message of the flower) and the short note above are given by the Mother for the Hippeastrum

This-Worldliness, Other-Worldliness and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga

(from a letter written in April 1949)

One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce

or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only, and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview — the spiritual and the material — and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible. My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other world, and plane of the Supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and the material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the Supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna

as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the Universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach Him with love and devotion and *bhakti*, to serve Him with one's works and to know Him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral Yoga.

28. 4. 1949 SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Himself*, Cent. ed. vol. 26, pp. 98-99)

There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by Tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil Existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

Sri Aurobindo

Some Answers of December

December 7, 1971

Difficult hours come to earth to compel men to overcome their small personal egoism and turn exclusively to the Divine for help and light. Man's wisdom is ignorance, the Divine alone knows.

December 9, 1971

Ego was necessary to form the individual being, to annihilate it therefore is difficult. There is a much better solution although more difficult: to transform it and to turn it into an instrument of the Divine.

The ego, thus converted and wholly consecrated to the Divine, becomes a specially powerful and efficient instrument.

The work is difficult and demands an absolute and steadfast sincerity. But they who have a strong will, an ardent aspiration and unshakable sincerity would find it worth their trouble to undertake it.

Q: There must be a method for that!

For each one the method works itself out in the course of the action; for each ego has its own character and needs a special method. The only qualities

The Mother in Kobé — Feb. Mar. 1920
(Photograph taken for passport for coming to Pondicherry)

indispensable for all are absolute perseverance and sincerity. Success is impossible if there is the least tendency to deceive oneself.

December 11, 1971

For you the best way to start is to find your psychic being, to concentrate upon it by making it the witness of all your inner movements and the judge of all that you should or should not do and make effort to submit your external nature to its decision.

The psychic being is the Divine Presence putting on an individual form. It is found quite deep within oneself beyond all thoughts.

December 13, 1971

The communications from the psychic do not come in mental forms. They are not ideas or reasonings. They have their own character quite distinct from the mind, something like a feeling that understands itself and acts.

The psychic is by its very nature calm, quiet and luminous, understanding and generous, wide and progressive. Its constant effort is to understand and progress.

The mind describes and explains.

The psychic sees and understands.

December 14, 1971

The psychic is conscious of being progressively formed through successive lives upon earth; therefore it has the

memory of the important moments in its previous lives.

The more the psychic came down into these physical lives on earth the more numerous and precise are its memories.

December 16, 1971

Feeling yourself alone in the midst of human beings is the sign that you have need now to find in your own being contact with the Divine Presence. You must then concentrate in silence and try to enter deep within so that you may discover the Divine Presence in the core of your consciousness, beyond all mental activity.

December 17, 1971

There comes a moment when life becomes unbearable without the Divine Presence. Give yourself then entirely to the Divine and you will emerge into the light.

December 20, 1971

We would take a big leap towards realisation if we drove away all defeatism from our consciousness.

It is by perfecting our faith in Divine Grace that we shall be able to conquer all defeatism in the subconscient.

THE MOTHER

(*Bulletin*, April 1972, pp. 35-39)

Sri Aurobindo

"I am here, I am here"

When all over the world there was a growing eagerness to know more and more about Sri Aurobindo and the interest in his work was on the increase, he suddenly disappeared from the earth-scene. Superficially, this is a terrible irony of fate. But a study of his life suggests that more than once the utterly unexpected occurred as if by a choice on his own part. One may say that such an occurrence is almost a regular feature at each decisive turn of the upward spiral of his life. We see the rising curve bending down of a sudden when he threw away the I. C. S. career after a brilliant success and retired into an unpretentious State job in Baroda. There his sun was again in the ascendent, but as soon as he had captured the vision and admiration of the people, he left that peak of eminence. The sun then passed under a cloud; it worked behind the veil till it burst upon the political horizon with a dazzling lustre and when everybody's eyes were filled with wonder and delight, the light hid itself in the shadows of the prison cell where he had one of the sovereign spiritual experiences of his life. When he came out of the prison, his tremendous sacrifice and wise guidance awakened the nation and it waited at his door with the offer of All-India leadership. Again he disappeared one night and passed into oblivion for a large

number of years in Pondicherry's unknown retreat. As if this was not enough, he entered into a greater oblivion when in 1926, after having achieved what we may call the first supreme victory in his sadhana, he, instead of hoisting the banner of the glory of the Spirit on the world's summit, withdrew himself for an indefinite period, to the utter surprise and disappointment of his close followers. Now at last has come as a logical conclusion the greatest oblivion in a most staggering manner and the shock had the intensity of a violent explosion. Always he has avoided the limelight and all his great achievements have been prepared in the secret silence of his retirement, and with each emergence he has brought down a greater light, a higher range of illumination and a vaster kingdom of knowledge and power.

But why has he chosen to withdraw through the last painful gate of human existence when, like other Yogis, he could have discarded the mortal sheath by an act of will and for what purpose? For Sri Aurobindo to do anything without a purpose and ultimate advantage is in the last degree inconceivable. If he gave in at times to what he called the Adversary, that was because, to quote his own words, "retreat" (*palâyanam*) suited his purpose. One who had mastered the secrets of Life and the Spirit by his termendous sadhana, who had been acclaimed as the Yogeshwara by those who had attained to the height of the Spirit, to him death could be neither a terror nor a mystery nor an inevitable necessity. Paying the full price of suffering he would pass through the "exit" of the common man, only if he felt that

otherwise his life, his own Yoga would lack completeness and that to bear the human destiny on his God-like shoulders he must face, in its own den as it were, the dark Power that rules over this destiny and somehow wrest from it all its secrets. He would embrace the dire extremity not unless he found it to be the one way to emerge finally victorious and say, "O human race, from the citadel of the dark King I have issued forth and brought what I promised to you, the golden seed of Immortality."

This supreme sacrifice whose total significance will remain ungrasped by our limited intelligence, he accepted, as the Mother has said in unmistakable terms, for us alone. To enter into its history we have to go back two years in time when the first symptom that completed the sacrifice appeared. It was like a tiny cloud on the horizon; nobody attached any importance to it. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to know what it meant. His disciple, Dr. P. Sanyal, F. R. C. S. (Eng.), an eminent surgeon of Calcutta who was consulted when he came for Darshan, recognised at once that it was a danger-signal and could not be neglected. He told Mother and Sri Aurobindo that it was a case of prostatic enlargement and frequency of micturition was the first symptom. He also explained at length its development and sequelae; he mentioned that as yet there was nothing to worry about, but warned us to watch the development carefully. It was a great advantage to be forearmed with the precise knowledge of things at the very initial stage, as it would facilitate Sri Aurobindo's action on it. For, as he has always maintained, knowledge of things and

their processes in detail makes the action of the Yogic Force more effective. The fight would now take place in the open light: there would be no cover of ignorance under which the dark Force could take shelter and advance its attacks. We were never in doubt as to the issue of the fight, though the Mother told us once that they had cured any number of serious maladies in others but as regards their own case, things were very different and very difficult indeed.

As we expected, after a couple of months or so, the symptoms cleared up altogether and when Dr. Sanyal came for the next Darshan, Sri Aurobindo told him emphatically, "It is no more troubling me; I have cured it." Our faith was confirmed.

The work on his epic poem *Savitri* went ahead with vigour and enthusiasm. Book after Book was being revised and released for publication. Some 400 to 500 lines he dictated in succession whose beauty and flow were a delight for their sweep of cosmic vision and their magical language. At this rate, *Savitri*, it seemed, would not take long to finish. On everybody's lips was the eager question, "How far *Savitri*?"

But *Savitri* was not his sole occupation. Side by side went on other multifarious and diverse activities all the facets of which he alone could deal with by his tremendous grasp of intuitive power. The world erroneously believes, or at least used to, that Sri Aurobindo had turned his whole life inwards and that, a recluse from life, he was not engaged in his own salvation and that of his disciples. How such a misunderstanding of a supreme dynamic person like him could have arisen

is most surprising. Let us recall what his life had been, the major spiritual realisations he had attained in the course of his arduous political activities; let us recall what his Yoga stands for and the epoch-making books he has written during his Yogic career. Apart from *Savitri* which is a monument by itself, the daily reading of papers, the perusal of numerous journals, weeklies, fortnightlies, quarterlies edited by people connected with the Ashram and of articles written in four or five languages, poems, essays, letters, the dictating of replies to questions and to crown all, the preparation of his own books and others', the attention to their manuscripts and proofs etc. — all these were his routine work. Add pressing demands from the Press, blessings implored for help and guidance in material distress — and the list should be enough to open a blind man's eyes. All this work had to be despatched within about two hours a day! During the latter part a remarkable faculty developed in him or was noticed for the first time. When I took some article for reading, he used to say "Have you not read it before?" "No." "Are you sure?" "How could I", I replied, "I have received it today". "Very strange, I seemed to have heard every word of it". That happened more than once. This labour any mortal sight can attest; but to the vast network of his cosmic activity as a Master Yogi, what vision can have access? One can have a dim penetration into it through the unrolling verse of *Savitri* and through other books or when he chose to let out a little inkling of it. We have played with him like Gopas in Vrindavan, cracked many jokes like comrades, even

quarrelled with him, discussed many subjects ranging from Art down to the attractive subject of the palate during the last few years of his companionship. The tender expression that dropped from his lips, the pointed flashes of his quick humour, the silent unassuming distinction of his manner and above all, his vigilant and subtle protection guarding us against all adverse forces — all these had been our heritage, but could we ever reflect in our passing mirror even the slightest shadow of his wide universal action? His detached greatness, disinterested largeness, limitless compassion and sweetness, as if Shiva had come down to earth to deliver the world from its roots of ignorance — where shall we see such a parallel? Even when his disease had advanced, he did not fail to respond to the call of the afflicted. To give an example: as he was engaged in the final drafting of the last two cantos of *Savitri*, there came an urgent call for help from a sadhika living outside. The lady was suffering from a mysterious disease; some doctors said it was coronary thrombosis, some diagnosed cervical rib and some other cancer and they all suggested different remedies. She, on the verge of death, took refuge at the Guru's feet and wired to him that she would rely on his force alone, even were she to die of it. News began to come in daily, by letters or wires. Suddenly no news at all for two or three days! Sri Aurobindo became worried and inquired again and again if any communication had arrived. At last he remarked, rather vexed, "How am I to save her if I don't get any news?" After this rude jerk news began to flow in and we are happy to find her settled

in the Ashram in sound health. Those who have received this inner sweetness and solicitude, directly or indirectly, will ever treasure it in their hearts as the very grace of Heaven.

Savitri alone which was the preoccupation nearest to his heart will one day fire the imagination of the world — by its sheer bulk and beauty of profound images, vivid words, felicitous and daring expressions, every detail of which he took sculptor-like pains to develop. The first Book itself went through ten revisions and had he been able to maintain the same god-like labour throughout or had he not been compelled to lean on the support a weak and at times unwilling assistant required to keep pace with his divine energy, *Savitri* would have seen the light of day before his own life's light had withdrawn. But, alas, that was not to be. About the middle of the last year, the symptoms of the malady came back and along with it we noticed a change in his mood. He was no more expansive, the gems of his speech became fewer and fewer. Days passed at times without any exchange of words except what was needed for the work. However much we tried to draw him out of this shell, it was a "yes", or a "no", or at most a smile that crowned our efforts and ruses. Naturally we began to speculate about the cause of this mysterious silence. Sometimes we thought it must be the grave world-situation that engaged his attention, — for at one time he remarked that the situation was very bad indeed, — sometimes other possibilities crossed our fertile brain. Or could it be the reappearance of the disease? That was another query. But all our efforts

were baffled, we could not penetrate that armour of remoteness. He was so near, yet had gone far away!

That did not, however, affect his daily work. *Savitri* had slowed down its pace. We were engaged in the revision of the two big cantos; already 200 to 300 new lines had been added. What a revision! Every word must be the *mot juste*, every line perfect, even every sign of punctuation flawless. One preposition was changed five times; to change a punctuation-sign one had sometimes to read a whole section. All these opened a new sight in me, but for his scribe to carry that burden of perfection on poor mortal shoulders was a task too enormous to cope with in an entirely satisfactory manner. That is why perhaps the work had fallen at places from its height, missed its peak.

At this time the Press sent up a demand for a new book. *Future Poetry* was given the preference and a chapter was actually written. But as some books on Modern Poetry needed to be consulted, it was shoved aside. He said, "Let us go back to *Savitri*." Again the same two cantos. The symptoms of the disease had not abated, though fortunately they had neither increased. There were temporary improvemments now and then. But the course of the disease did not seem to disturb him at all in his work. His whole attention was now focussed on *Savitri* for which we could but spare about two hours at the most. So the progress had to be slow especially as he had to dictate and depend on another's sight to be guided in his movement. Now came the call from the *Bulletin* for an article. That over, the correspondence and miscellaneous writings swelled up to such

an extent that he was at last obliged to remark, "I am finding no time for my real work." Then the path got fairly clear and I was wondering what would be the next choice when looking away he declared, "Take up *Savitri*. I want to finish it soon." The last phrase was a bombshell on my ear. "Finish it soon ? What on earth..." I asked myself. My bewildered glance met an impassive face. So again the labour with these two cantos began. What surprised me still more was that he seemed actually to hurry the pace which was quite against his characteristic nature. Always habituated to slow and leisurely ways in his moods and dealings as if the whole of eternity were in his hand, he was the very embodiment of the Divine in his unparalleled patience and poise, in his conquests and withdrawals, in his diggings and in his soars. Every word he pronounced had a repose, every simple thing he ate was an offering, every step he took was a gentle touching of the earth with his hallowed feet. When his bureau was ransacked, it was found littered with copies and copies of *Savitri*, no less than 4 or 5 versions of some cantos ! Here, there, in note books, in loose sheets, in small blocks, lines after lines written, scratched, new lines added in between like packed sardines, the links and connections shooting with arrow-marks up and down the epic battle field. A genius or a God in labour ? Such being the mode of procedure, it could not come as a surprise to hear from his mouth that he wanted to finish *Savitri* soon. Not only that. There seemed to be no longer that unflagging will for perfection, not that élan. On the contrary, close repetitions of ideas and words sounded like obvious flaws

in the compact intensity of this massive structure. Those who have carefully gone through these two cantos did not fail to notice this defect. "What has happened? What has gone wrong? Why has he lost his patience? Illness? Why is he also so grave?" were my brooding questions. At last after many detours and ups and downs in the far-flung journey, the goal was in sight. What a veritable rock of resistance these two cantos proved to be! One who had poured strains upon strains packed with grandeur and beauty, emotion and fervour, thought and vision in the dictated cantos on such subjects as Nirvana, as if the very goddess Saraswati had settled in his throat, was halted even by the pebbles of punctuation! As, at last the cantos were wound up and the last full stop had been recorded, a smile of satisfaction burst upon his lips and he said, "Ah, it is finished?" How well I remember that smile, as if after a long strenuous journey in failing strength one had finally reached one's station! And yet it was not the station, there were still many milestones to cover! "What is left now?", was his second question. "The Book of Death and the Epilogue." "Ah, that? We shall see about that later on," he answered, in a calm and contented tone. But I was not contented at all, for the many repetitions at the end which he seemed to have hurriedly added jarred on my ear. But I decided that it was wiser to reserve judgement and wait for the revision to take place. Surely these flaws would not escape his eagle-vision. It was much later during the agonising moments of night-enveloped consciousness that what struck me as flaws and repetitions came forcefully with a new significance:

A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers.

*

In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can help.
She only can save herself and save the world.[1]

Are these not his last message, his last injunction to us?... The emptiness slowly melted away and in its place shone his Right Hand, the dauntless boon-giver the Mother.

The expected revision never took place; for, along with the close of these two cantos, came winter and there was a sudden increase in the symptoms; urination became more frequent; with it, discomfort. These symptoms had appeared from time to time, to be cleared up and he had never for an instant stopped his work in spite of all inconveniences. Many times I anticipated, almost hoped, that there would be a respite owing to such relapses, but physical trouble would not hinder him. Even if there was half an hour's time, he would utilise it. On many occasions when I told him, "There is not much time today" and almost expected a postponement of the work, he would come out, to my surprise, with "We will work a little". That passionate devotion to work had brought its final reward: *Savitri* was his last testament. As the disease progressed, we began to feel concerned, though we knew perfectly well that we were nothing more than mere spectators and whatever had to be done, he must be doing it. "How

[1] *Savitri*

is it then the disease is progressing?" was my occasional self-questioning. We were dealing with a human body but not with a human patient; our means and standards of action did not apply any more than the laws of our earth to the being of other planets. We could only lay before his gaze the silent surreptitious approach of various undercurrents that tried to assail and break down the physical substratum, and depend upon his own Yogic Power to repulse the attacks.

There were about ten days or so for the Darshan. A surgeon-friend Satyavrata Sen F. R. C. S. (Eng.) had arrived for the Darshan. He was consulted; he corroborated the diagnosis given at the outset by Dr. Sanyal. Sen said that the gland had enlarged. Sri Aurobindo also remarked he had also been feeling it for some time, though once it had completely disappeared. "What is the remedy?" he asked. There was only one radical cure, but Dr. Sen knew that it would gain neither Mother's nor Sri Aurobindo's approval. For Sri Aurobindo could not be subjected to the cruel and not always effective slashes with the knife. The mere use of a catheter was not favoured. Nor was it urgent at this stage. If any intervention were necessary, it could be done after the Darshan. So once more we followed the curve of the disease in a silent watchful attitude, ready to help, but never flagging in our faith that the curve would be checked. One night the urine suddenly stopped. I ran down to call Dr. Sen. In the meantime the urine started flowing. When he learned that I had gone to fetch the doctor, he remarked, "Why? Has he lost his head?" When we returned and heard his remark, I do

not know what gave me the thrill, my madness or the removal of the obstruction! He said, "Why have you unnecessarily troubled this poor fellow?" Then in an affectionate tone he continued, "You see, I had a dream; it seemed I was freely passing water and when I woke up I found this obstruction. Nothing more. Do you understand?" He added, smiling, "No cause to be nervous". Next day, when the Mother heard the story, she also made a similar remark. She said, "After having passed so many years with Sri Aurobindo, you still get frightened?" — "What to do, Mother?", I replied apologetically, "we are dealing with no other person than Sri Aurobindo." — "That is exactly why you should never get afraid. Do you not know that his mighty force is always with you and helping you? No, fear has no place at all, especially among you who are serving him." I felt ashamed but uplifted too.

Darshan was now at our door. On the eve, a letter had arrived from an astrologer to the effect that Sri Aurobindo would be subject to a grave malady which may even threaten his life. We simply laughed out the idea, but he said, "Will you enquire what exactly he has written? I feel that he has caught some truth." "What nonsense!" was my immediate reaction. Sri Aurobindo had studied the subject of astrology and held that astrology could very well disclose correctly the past of a person, but he said that its readings of the future would not be inevitable, especially in case of Yogis who can change their own and others' destiny. He narrated the story of Narayan Jyotishi, a famous astrologer of Calcutta, whose predictions about Sri Aurobindo had

all come true except on one fact, that Sri Aurobindo would be seriously ill at the age of 63 but he had also mentioned that by his yogic action, Sri Aurobindo could overcome that danger and then he would live up to a ripe old age. "So, you see, I am still alive", he said smiling. He accepted nothing as predetermined and fixed in this world-field. Everything, in his view, is a play of possibilities and a Yogi can change these possibilities, even the destiny of others as well as his own. It being so, for astrology to determine Sri Aurobindo's life and action was, we thought, sheer folly. But his inquiry puzzled us. It was found, however, that the astrologer had only hinted at some trivial malady. We enjoyed the fun, as on a similar occasion mentioned by K. D. Sethna in his article '*The Passing of Sri Aurobindo*'. The Darshan was now on. A vast crowd streamed forth with their offerings. At one time the question was mooted if the Darshan should not be postponed, but considering the anxiety and disappointment it would cause in the hearts of the devotees, the call was responded to at the cost of discomfort and undue exertion. Everything went on well — the silence, the calm reigned in the atmosphere pervaded by the beatific Presence of the Mother and the Master. After about two hours, an uneasy stir seized the throng and the rumour ran that Sri Aurobindo was not well; people in rapid succession took their blessings and beyond the horizon of their outward sight saw the Master beside the Mother in an everlasting communion and kinship within. The restless thought was no more voiced forth. But soon after the Darshan, the symptoms broke down

another barrier, as it were, and visibly marked a broad thrust in the advancement of the disease. The question of passing the catheter could no more be left aside. It was agreed; a wire was sent to Dr. Sanyal to come down at once. He had previously been warned to be ready to start, in case there was an urgent necessity.

The instrument immediately relieved the obstruction and we began to feel light-hearted. But our joy was short-lived. For in the wake of the intruding instrument came its long shadow, fever due to infection. A not uncommon feature, yet it gave us an unpleasant shiver. Dr. Sanyal's arrival at this juncture was like warm sunshine and he dissipated all our anxieties by his calm confidence. We apprised him of the whole clinical development since he has last seen Sri Aurobindo. He wondered how that small insignificant speck of cloud he had noticed in the early stage could, from the perimeter of his consciousness, slowly, almost craftily, enlarge, envelope and take possession of the whole physical being. He asked himself, "How could this Adversary gain such an unbelievable dominance against the puissant action of Sri Aurobindo's force? He had cured himself once, what happened afterwards? Did he not take any step at all to prevent the course of the disease? Otherwise I do not see why it should develop to such an extent." To these questions no satisfactory answer could be given. What I observed was that while our main concern had been the patient development of the future glory of the human race in the language of the gods and in their symbols, the disease simultaneously advanced at a slow pace; Sri Aurobindo did not pay any

particular heed to it, either because he had not sufficient time or because he did not care; but it had been a mystery all through. One would say that he had allowed it to advance, for reasons unknown to us, slowly and gradually till the completion of *Savitri*, after which he stopped all his work and withdrew the control on the disease. That is the only explanation reason could supply to the rapid worsening of the condition after this stage. Whatever it was, Dr. Sanyal was yet optimistic and so were we of the final result. Our vigil went on, but Sri Aurobindo seemed now to withdraw from his surroundings and the release from the obstruction helped him towards that end. Evidently, he found the deep plunge more useful for whatever purpose he had in view than caring about the afflictions of the body. He appeared to have allowed the body to have its own actions and reactions while he was engaged in a more inscrutable work of world-significance. The body he had assumed had served him well, and, as the Mother has said, it had suffered, endured, worked and achieved all for us. Now, if it served as an impediment to the god-like sweep of his movements, why should he not change it ? As he did not allow the physical handicap to trouble him in his work and maintained throughout the same fire and passion, so, after the accomplishment of the work, he did not allow the body's distress to swerve him from his occult sublime purpose. Even of this dire disablement he took the amplest advantage. His was not a nature to be cowed by circumstances, however adverse they might be. If he had to give in on one front, he must gain the full compensation on another. Even

if he knew beforehand that defeat and failure would be the result, that would not stop his working and fighting up to the end. "Even if I knew that my mission would fail, I would go on working till the last moment" were his words in a letter. *Nishkama* (disinterested) Karma of the Gita was his motto. An interesting example of which can be cited with regard to the Cripps Mission, now a matter of history. When the Mission arrived in India, everybody knows how Sri Aurobindo went out of his way and entreated all the big leaders to accept it and even approved of a disciple going to Delhi as his envoy. But after his departure, Sri Aurobindo told us frankly that nothing would come out of it. The Mission would fail. "Then" we said, "why have you taken all this trouble?" He answered, smiling, "I have done a bit of *nishkama karma*." That was his life, both occult and overt. That is why the Adversary was always surprised by his unexpected moves. Divine Diplomat that he was, we have yet to see what was the supreme object of this highest strategy. He could not have been blind to the approach of the dark-cowled Figure. He envisaged a fight, a grim struggle and that is why he followed the same method he had always practised in his life — to be prepared in advance for any eventuality. As he had always marched ahead of time, so he marked every step he took with a solid foreknowledge and divine strength which passed our immediate understanding. Now we realise the meaning of his cryptic phrases and casual remarks. Many people asked us if he had left any message, any advice as regards the work, sadhana etc., before he passed away.

The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. 'No'! because, after he had withdrawn completely inwards, he had done no work, he had uttered no word except in relation to the disease. 'Yes', because before he had passed into that stage, *Savitri*, as I have mentioned, was his last work, and the last seal and signature on its golden leaf were those lines which seemed to us repetitions. Repetitions they were, but now they come as the blazonning revelation of the whole secret of his Yoga: Surrender to the Mother. Let us read those prophetic lines and the sense will stand crystal clear:

A day may come when She must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.

*

In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,

*

Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.

*

Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
She only can save herself and save the world.[1]

He was not in a hurry to finish the Book of Death. His principal task had been completed and hence his calm and contented smile when he reached the end of it. What was of supreme importance he had been able

[1] *Savitri*

to communicate and about what was not, he said in a leisurely fashion, "We shall see about it afterwards", knowing very well indeed, what he meant. Now, that momentous message imparted, slowly his consciousness slipped inwards and he became more and more absorbed within. Medical experts will say, "It was a simple uraemic coma." Well, I shall quote Dr. Sanyal's own words: "A patient who comes out of that coma every one or two hours, asks for a drink, enquires about time, his must be a very strange type of coma. At least I have never come across such a type throughout my medical experience."

Whatever might have been the type, our problem became more difficult. We had solely relied on his Force, but the result had not uplifted our hopes. We could go ahead with our costly tablets and precious injections, but without the support of his spiritual Force, what effect would they produce ? Human as we are we can but think of our own resources: good or bad we fall back on them in our need. But how to administer such strong and powerful drugs to one who had been unaccustomed to any medicine for more than half a century, was another question that vexed us. Any one who had seen Sri Aurobindo at close quarters could never forget this Divine Child with a body as supple, radiant and pure. His bare body, when he used to sit before the table for writing, his shapely hands, his long delicate fingers, had nothing of the crude mortal flesh in them; they were suffused, as it were, with a white transparent light, "*une blancheur éclatante*", that could like the X-ray make one see through and through. How

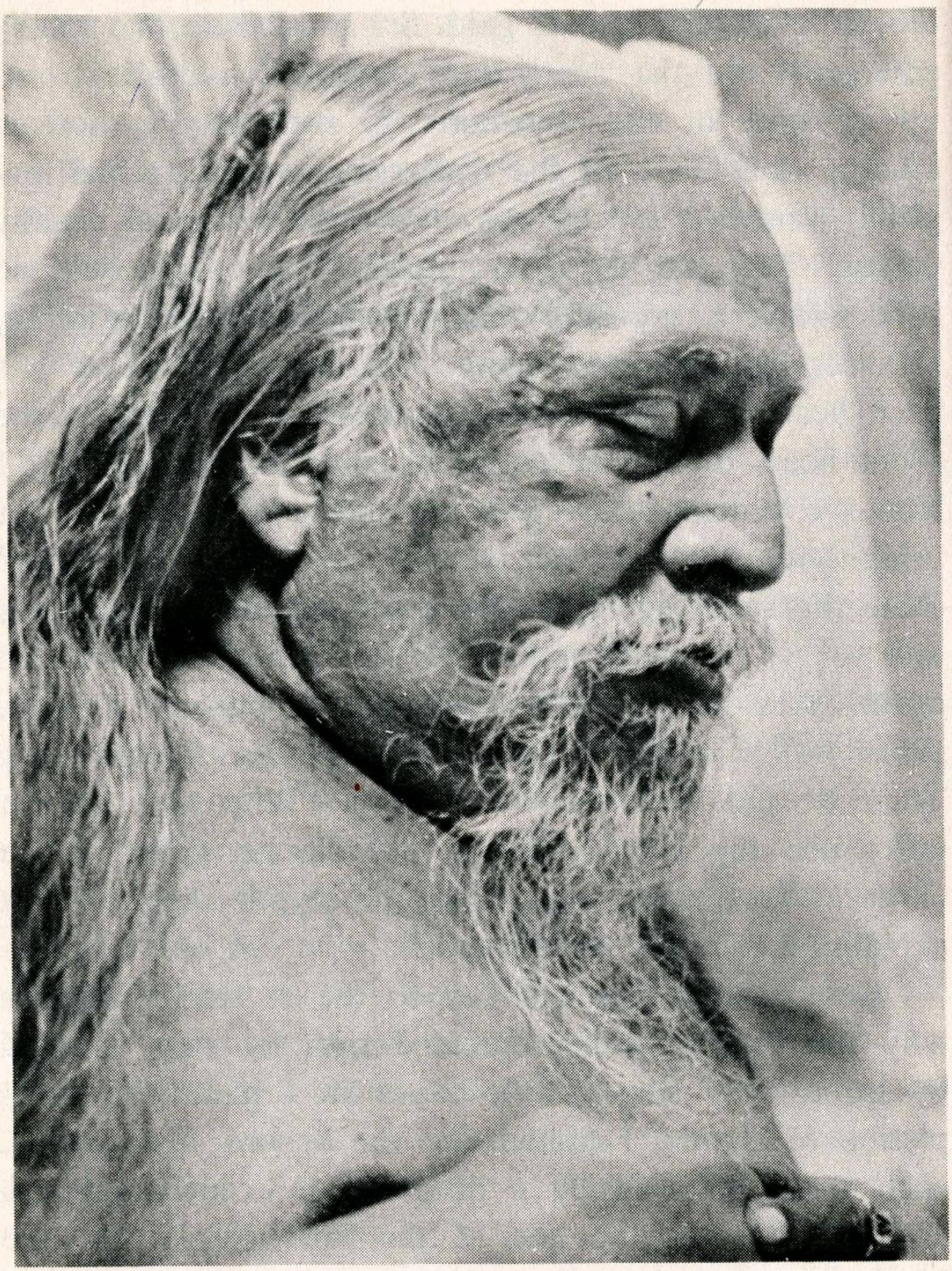
often have I not seen this radiance, when he used to sit before the table for writing or for rest, or when he was lying on the bed as if on the lap of the Divine Mother, with a half-bare body, the hands held together behind the head, the lips smiling in a wakeful dream ! Every part of the body presented the picture of a god in human guise that could not be tampered with in the ordinary human way. Tampering would be nothing but a sacrilege. But, alas, human necessity knows no law, respects no person. And we subjected him to all our instruments of torture with the previous sanction obtained as a gracious gesture to satisfy our mortal ignorance. He knew that the catheter would be of no avail and he emphatically ruled it out, but as we had not the insight nor the proper appraisement of the value of words when they are clothed in the common language we are habituated to use, we insisted on the dangerous remedies in which we had faith and confidence. As the disease was taking a bad turn we repeatedly asked him to use his spiritual force to cure it, as we had been taught and made to experience that behind every malady, as behind everything else, there are forces that help and hinder. It is the proper adjustment of these forces that brings in success. Those how can consciously or unconsciously manipulate these forces achieve success in their career. We knew that without the effective help of his Force all our remedial measures would be palliatives of the surface manifestation of the deep-rooted trouble. But each time we questioned him, we met with an enigmatic silence. All the same, we had no positive reason to believe that

he was indifferent to the course of the malady or that he was engaged in a far more serious struggle whose issue would have greater significance at that stage for the human race than his own cure. So, as the disease was following in its downward gravitation the typical picture, our duty pointed to us our own responsibility. The advent of every dark sign and symptom was a pressing finger on our perplexed mood. As a result, we adopted all the means of saving that were available to us. But the Decree was otherwise!

At last arrived the School Anniversary on the 1st and 2nd December, with its programme of athletics and dramatics. The whole Ashram, busy and bustling, had its attention diverted there and nobody ever suspected that another drama — a lofty tragedy — was being enacted in those hours of Fate in the closed chambers of Sri Aurobindo. His ailment had been veiled from the gaze of the disciples and the disease also was of such a nature as to admit of being kept a guarded secret. But now the veil was rent, for with the successful ending of the function, the symptoms took a very grave turn, as if the violent tide deliberately checked until this day was now allowed to break through. I say "as if", but there was no doubt that it was so, for when he was informed on the 2nd night that the function had terminated successfully, he remarked with a broad smile, "Ah, it is finished?" Then only he allowed the Adversary who had been held at bay to leap with fury and Sri Aurobindo plunged deeper within, snapping as it were, the last link of his physical being with the need of earth-matter.

It was the memorable 4th December, the date written for ever in letters of gold. Sri Aurobindo had totally emerged from the depth and expressed a desire to sit up. In spite of our objections, he insisted. We noticed after a while that all the distressing symptoms had magically vanished and he was once more a normal healthy person. Then he sat in the chair. The change was so sudden and unexpected that we looked at each other, in sheer joy and amazement. "At last, our prayer has been heard!" This was the sentiment welling up in the silent heart of our devotion. It could not be believed! Now we ventured to repeat our question: "Are you not using your force to get rid of the disease?" "No!" came the shocking reply. We could not believe our ears and to get a confirmation of our disbelief we asked again. Now no ground was left to harbour the illusion. What we heard was as plain and sharp as a sabre-edge. Then we put forth the bold query: "Why not? If you don't use the force, how is the disease going to be cured?" To this he simply gave the cryptic reply: "Can't explain; you won't understand."

Here at last was the key to the mystery! That is why the disease had progressed step by step, marked by three clear stages in its downward path: the completion of *Savitri*, Darshan and the School Anniversary, each stage followed by a deeper and deeper in-drawn condition. It was at one of the final stages that the Mother remarked, "Whenever I was there, I used to see him pulling down the Supramental Light." It was clear from this statement what Sri Aurobindo was busy with. He had shifted his gaze and concentration to



SRI AUROBINDO
Mahasamadhi, Dec. 5, 1950

something else which, to his view, must have been much more importance than minding the afflictions of the body. But we had not the vision nor the comprehension; so we thought that the descent of the Light would fulfil our heart's desire. Though on the one hand his curt reply had taken the last plank away, this sudden transition instilled faith and hope — "the gleaming shoulder of some god-like hope"[1] that had upbuoyed us all through. It was much later when the sun had crossed beyond our horizon that these extraordinary incidents showed their true significance.

After an hour he came back to his bed and along with his coming returned all the signs and symptoms with a vengeance. The short respite seemed to have given him time for a further grapple with the advancing Shadow that was trying to draw a premature veil upon his work. Half an hour before the fatal moment, he drank some water and bestowed on all a last glance of compassion and recognition for the services rendered and took the plunge ultimate. Even then we had not the slightest suspicion that

This was the day when Satyavan must die.[2]

The news spread around in the early hours of the morning. The reaction of the disciples can be better imagined than described. Through the hush of night one by one they came and mounted up the stairs of Heaven to see what nobody had seen before. It was not death they saw, not a resurrection, nor a withdrawal into Nirvana but a grand repose, a death that was pul-

[1] *Savitri* [2] *Ibid.*

sating with power, light and beauty in every limb as if death had become immortal in the body of the King of kings. A vivid rendering of the Truth into a touch-stone of Matter, it was no longer the body, but the golden lid which half-covered, half-revealed that Truth. Those who had the inner sight had realised the Truth and those who had the inner ear had heard in the still cave of their heart the piercing cry, "I am here, I am here !"

In that awakened consciousness we are marching forward towards the Goal the Master had set before us, for which he had worked to the last breath and has promised to do so till the Goal is attained. The Mother, supreme creatrix and realiser of that Goal, is our Guide and Goddess. Enriched with all his inexhaustible achievements, occult and spiritual, and with the supramental Light that had automatically passed on to her she is shaping us to the mould and figure he had visioned as the future type of humanity. Any one who has visited the Ashram after the great Event could not but have been impressed by the will to victory that his sacrifice has engendered in every breast. Out of his Samadhi a thousand flames seem to be mounting up and, lodged in our soul, burning in an ever rejuvenating fire, while His Presence enveloping and merging with and radiating from the Mother's being and body is pervading the whole atmosphere. One can see His Presence, hear his foot-falls, his rhythmic voice, ever vigilant, devoid of the encumbrance of the physical body. One day the sacrifice will bear fruit; what he had depicted in *Savitri*, will come true. For, what is, after all, *Savitri* if not the

inner life-episodes of the Mother and the Master ? What he had pictured in the great epic has been faithfully enacted on the world-stage. The veil has fallen on the first part of that wonderful Drama and the sequel is being played behind the screen. The Fight with the last supreme Adversary has not ceased; if it has ended on the earth's battle-field in an apparent failure, it is raging as fiercely in the occult planes. When at the close of the Duel, the curtain will be lifted, we shall hear the sonorous recital of the Book of Death, we shall see materialised the Epilogue on the earth-stage, and throughout the world will echo and re-echo the embodied passionate cry of Victory:

"I am here, I am here !"

NIRODBARAN